

\$Contact the agency, foundation - Ask about funding categories, application procedures and deadlines, eligibility, other resources, etc.

\$Don't use a scattershot or boilerplate approach - Proposals should be original and tailored to the funding source you are approaching.

\$Be brief - No one has time to wade through pages and pages of claims. Allow yourself enough time in advance to boil down the bulk. More paper doesn't necessarily result in more money.

\$Tell a story - The individuals who read proposals are people; they respond best to stories about things and events. Ask someone who knows nothing about your project to read the proposal. If it is unclear it will be, in all likelihood, unclear to anyone who reads it.

\$Avoid jargon - Plain English is the language of effective proposals. Get rid of shop talk, jargon, buzz words, insider language. Be direct.

\$Don't assume, allege, infer - No one understands your claims as well as you wish they did. Be specific and support your claims with concrete information and proper documentation.

\$Put praise in somebody else's mouth - Don't lard your proposals with "we are the best" claims. Let others say good things about you/your organization. Even better, let the facts speak to your excellence.

\$Don't pad - Leave out the non-essentials. Read the instructions carefully and use the checklist if provided. Provide what is requested (*i.e.*, board member list and 501(c)(3) status letter for organizations; resume(s), sample(s) of work, reviews, letter(s) from project partners, etc.). Use the checklist and do not send excessive materials. If the instructions are unclear, call the agency, foundation, or other funding source for clarification.

\$Don't package - Nobody is impressed by fancy bindings or covers, or elaborate fillers or frills. More often than not they are discarded.

\$Submit a budget consistent with the narrative - For example, if you request travel money the proposal must demonstrate the need for travel. Consultants? Who/Why? Qualifications?, etc. Always verify your budget figures. No one wants to give money to an organization that cannot manage funds.

\$Set up and maintain a file for each proposal or application - Place the file copy of the application, the award notification letter(s), related materials, correspondence from the agency or funding source, final report forms, etc., and all project-related information in the file throughout the project. Do not wait until the project's completion before locating report forms, financial information, news articles, programs, etc. Maintain a grant calendar or timeline with important project dates marked, such as application and evaluation deadlines and all related activity dates.

\$Thank all funding source(s) promptly - Acknowledge all sources of funding in all publicity, and printed materials and on web sites.

\$Maintain an accurate & up-to-date record of project-related / eligible expenses (and all receipts and vouchers) and project income - Place all information in the file. Do not use project-specific income for items other than those included in the original application. .

\$Draft and sign all contracts as required by the agency or funding source - Place a copy in the file. Provide copies of all signed contracts to the funding source (as required) promptly. Be sure that contracts with artists contain language or other elements specified in program guidelines.

\$Check your mailbox regularly - Review the correspondence and contact the funding source immediately if you have any questions. Place correspondence from the agency or funding source in the appropriate file immediately after reading.

\$Inform the agency or funding source of any change of address, personnel or other pertinent information immediately - Regularly update the agency or funding source on the progress or status of your project. Invite a representative to conduct a site visit.

\$Inform the public and all participants about all project activities before and throughout the project - Add the names of board members of the funding agency or source, officials of local government, state officials, and/or school officials to your mailing lists.

\$Do not make any changes in a grant-funded project without first having contacted the agency or funding source - Send a written request for approval of the change(s) and any related budget or supplemental information the agency or funding source would need to consider the proposed changes). Do not proceed with the project until you have secured approval of the agency or funding source.

\$Prepare, sign and submit all final reports and program evaluation materials on time - Verify final report procedures and deadlines. Do not request an extension. Do not submit partial reports. Verify all expenses and income. Make certain you meet all reporting requirements. If you have questions contact the funding source well in advance of the final report deadline. Keep a completed copy of the final report, program evaluation and documentation on file.

VIRGINIA COMMISSION



for THE ARTS

Other Resources

Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation
201 North Charles Street, Suite 401
Baltimore, MD 21201
410.539.6656
maaf@midatlanticarts.org
www.midatlanticarts.org

National Endowment for the Arts
Nancy Hanks Center
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20506
202.682.5400; 202.682.5430 (T.T.)
202.682.5532 (Office of AccessAbility)
www.arts.endow.gov

Virginia Department of Education
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, VA 23216-2120
804.225.2881 (fine arts)
804.786.8078 (music)
www.pen.k12.va.us

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
2801 Kensington Avenue
Richmond, VA 23221
804.367.2323

Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public
Policy
145 Ednam Drive
Charlottesville, VA 22901
434.924.6895
www.virginia.edu/vfh

Arts, Education & Funding Resources

Americans for the Arts
www.artsusa.org/

Artswire
www.artswire.org

Chronicle of Philanthropy
www.philanthropy.com/

Educational Resource & Information Clearinghouse
www.ericae.net/

Foundation Center Online
<http://fdncenter.org>

Fund-Raising.Com
www.fund-raising.com

Getty Education Institute for the Arts
www.artsednet.getty.edu

Grantsmanship Center
www.tgci.com/

Internet Nonprofit Center
www.nonprofits.org

John F. Kennedy Center Education Department
artsedge.kennedy-center.org

Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation
www.midatlanticarts.org

Music Educators National Conference
www.menc.org

National Art Education Association
www.naea-reston.org

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
www.nasaa-arts.org

National Conference of State Legislatures
www.ncsl.org

National Endowment for the Humanities
www.neh.fed.us/

Philanthropy News Network Journal Online
www.pj.org/

Public Broadcasting Service
www.pbs.org

Smithsonian Institution
www.si.edu

U.S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov

Virginia Association of Museums
www.vamuseums.org/

Virginia Commission for the Arts
www.arts.virginia.gov

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts CEO
www.vmfa.state.va.us/LearnMore.html



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The Virginia Commission for the Arts is the state agency which supports the arts through funding from the Virginia General Assembly and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Commission distributes grants to artists, arts and other not-for-profit organizations, educators, educational institutions, and local governments, and provides technical assistance in arts management.

VIRGINIA Commission for the ARTS



Resources for Funding

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Proposal Preparation Tips